

'Friendly' spies

When the Israeli government notified the U.S. State Department last summer that it knew precise details of a conversation between Ambassador Andrew Young and the PLO's Zehdi Terzi, held in the Beekman Street apartment of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United Nations, reputable journalists reported that Israeli agents had bugged the place. These reports were soon followed by others, equally authoritative, that U.S. intelligence had intercepted the conversations.

Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, in responding to the allegations of Israeli bugging, was remarkably phlegmatic, considering our recent experience with other "friendly" foreign intelligence services — notably those of Chile, Iran, and South Korea. "The wonderful newspapers of this country are filled with assertions and allegations," he said. "I've seen no facts."

The early accounts of the incident, however, made a strong case that Israeli agents had, indeed, bugged the place. If true, this would be a clear violation of the Omnibus Crime Control Act, which authorizes fines and imprisonment for such illegal electronic surveillance. Asked whether that would concern him, Civiletti seemed to wave off the reporters' concern. "It would depend on a lot of factors and circumstances," he said.

U.S. officials seem to have profound respect for Mossad, the legendary Israeli intelligence service. Recent events strongly suggest, however, that it is time for the U.S. Government (and certain quarters of the press) to come down out of this James Bond fantasy world and address some of the more murky issues raised in the Andrew Young affair.

Only days before the Young-Terzi contact was exposed, a preliminary draft of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee study of intelligence operations in this country was leaked first to columnist Jack Anderson and later to *The Washington Post*. Concentrating on operations of so-called allied intelligence services — Chile's DINA, the Shah's SAVAK, Taiwan's National Security Bureau, and agents of Ferdinand Marcos — the Committee found, as *The Post* reported, that "all had intelligence liaison agreements with the CIA, and they operated with a relatively free hand here."

SAVAK, the Committee found, also had a close relationship with the FBI. The principal activities of SAVAK and our other "foreign friends" was to harass exiled opponents of their regimes and covertly influence American public opinion towards the dictatorships they served. The most notorious and odious of such activities was the assassination of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier and a young American woman, Ronni Karpon Moffitt, in the streets of Washington four years ago, and the efforts of South Korean agents to manipulate members of Congress, the press, and U.S. universities.

The Israeli government might have weighed the outcome of the Letelier and "Koreagate" cases when it decided to reveal details of the Young-Terzi meeting. The Chilean government has successfully stonewalled U.S. prosecutors seeking the extradition of Chilean secret police officials charged with planning the Letelier murder. The "Koreagate" case fizzled to a close during the summer when charges were dropped against Tongsun Park, the key actor in the bribery scandal. One U.S. Congressman and a South Korean businessman, a minor figure in the Korean operations, went to jail.

The operations of Mossad were not included in the Senate study. The bland response of U.S. officials to possibly illegal Israeli operations here suggests that Mossad agents have been given a green light to do as they please. In the view of Washington's national security bureaucracy, the stakes are so great in the U.S.-Israeli "special relationship" that acquiescence in Mossad's operations would seem to be justified.

So far, sources say, Israeli operations here have been limited to intelligence gathering, propaganda, and an occasional black-bag job on Arab embassies and other diplomatic missions. In intelligence terms, this has been a small price to pay for the collaboration of Israeli intelligence with the CIA in espionage operations directed against the Soviet Union. For thirty years, Israel has proved to be a reliable and valuable

intelligence ally. Therein, of course, lies Israeli intelligence's ace in the hole. Should the United States object to Israeli intelligence operations here, Israel could threaten to shut down the information pipeline from Russia.

The Senate Committee found this was the reason U.S. officials looked the other way when "friendly" agents were bribing officials and beating up exile dissidents here. The Shah of Iran made the quid pro quo explicit. In December 1976, U.S. Ambassador (and former CIA director) Richard Helms cabled Henry Kissinger: "As you well know, we are very beholden here in the intelligence area and therefore correspondingly vulnerable." SAVAK went on its way harassing Iranian students here, and the CIA kept its missile-monitoring sites in Iran.

The Senate should move to convene full hearings on American complicity in the operations of "friendly" foreign intelligence services here, using the Foreign Relations Committee report as a starting point. Allegations of illegal Israeli operations should be included in such hearings. Such a forum might also be appropriate for probing the dark corners of the Letelier investigation and other past operations here. And it might contribute to the development of realistic intelligence guidelines for the future.

—JEFF STEIN

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